

Rattlesnakes are common in California up to an elevation of about 11,000 feet. In spring they emerge from their dens where they have been hibernating. All rattlesnakes will bite, including the young, and are poisonous.

# Rattlesnakes

The following precautions are recommended to avoid being bitten by rattlesnakes:

1. When outdoors, look carefully where you walk, play, sit or lie down to relax. Rattlesnakes can be found under logs, among tall grasses or underbrush.
2. Don't put hands into holes on the ground, such as gopher holes, hollow of trees or logs, or other openings where rattlesnakes may be hiding.
3. Rattlesnakes seek shade during hot days. Look first when going into shady areas. They also may be under large rocks or in outbuildings.
4. Use a bright flashlight when walking at night. Snakes are active at night when it is cool. If you are camping, gather firewood before dark.
5. Carefully check your sleeping bag at night.
6. Rats and mice serve as readily available food for rattlesnakes. Keep yards clean by clearing away debris where rats could breed.
7. Rattlesnakes may or may not rattle when a person gets too close to them. **DO NOT PANIC.** Stand still and try to determine its location. Back away slowly. Snakes can lunge or "make a strike" at their intended victim at a distance equivalent to one-half or one-third of its body length. When given a chance, snakes may choose to retreat.
8. Do not reach out where you cannot see, such as a rocky ledge above your head. There may be a rattlesnake there.
9. If you see a *dead* rattlesnake, stay away from it!



10. Most snake bites on humans are on the legs or lower legs. It is best to wear long pants, thick socks and boots when walking or working in grassy or bushy fields and yards.

## First Aid Tips

If bitten, **seek medical treatment immediately!** Children and elderly people are particularly at risk. Calm and reassure the victim.

Wash the wound and immobilize the injured area, keeping it lower than the heart if possible. Do not apply ice to a snakebite. Do not cut the wound or apply a tourniquet or use electric shock. If possible, carry the victim who must be taken to a medical facility or have him walk slowly.

If you are in a remote area and cannot get professional medical care within 30 minutes, carry a snakebite kit and suction the wound according to the directions in the kit.



County of San Bernardino Department of Public Health  
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES  
**VECTOR CONTROL PROGRAM**

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# Mojave Green Rattlesnake

The Mojave Green Rattlesnake is found from sea level to 8,300 feet elevation in the desert, rocky foothills, Joshua tree and creosote-sagebrush areas. It can be found in the Mojave Desert area to the southwest corner of Utah, southeast through Arizona, down across south-central Arizona to the southwest tip of New Mexico, and down into Mexico.

This medium-sized snake (approximately 24 to 51 inches) actually comes in many shades from green to olive to grey to brown. The light-edged diamonds down the center of the back are clearly defined by a row of light scales. Black and white rings encircle the tail just above the rattle. Another prominent feature is a light-colored stripe running from behind the eyes to behind the mouth.

The Mojave's diet consists of large kangaroo rats and other small rodents. As with most rattlesnakes, activity is favored.

This snake is regarded as one of the most aggressive and dangerous in the United States because of its powerful neurotoxic venom that can lead to respiratory difficulty and death. Its venom is 10 times more toxic than any other rattlesnake in the U.S. One bite is sufficient to kill a human.

## First Aid Tips

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Wash the wound and immobilize the injured area, keeping it lower than the heart if possible. Do not apply ice to a snakebite. Do not cut the wound or apply a tourniquet or use electric shock. If possible, carry the victim who must be taken to a medical facility or have him walk slowly.

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